

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 SCEM-02 NEA-10 AGR-20 CEA-02

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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

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FOR USEC

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR TS

SUBJECT: MASMOUDI COMMENTS ON ARAB-AFRICAN AND AFRICAN-EUROPEAN COOPERATION

1. DURING CONVERSATION JAN 4 (REPORTED SEPTELS) FON
MIN MOHAMED MASMOUDI COMMENTED ON GROWING ARAB-AFRICAN
COOPERATION FOLLOWING ARAB SUMMIT IN ALGIERS. MASMOUDI
HAD ACCOMPANIED PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA ON PART OF HIS TWO-WEEK TRIP IN DECEMBER TO SEVERAL AFRICAN CAPITALS.

MASMOUDI SAID ARABS WERE ENCOURAGED BY OWN COOPERATION
AND SOLIDARITY ON PETROLEUM QUESTION AND WERE THINKING
OF WAYS TO EXTEND THIS TYPE OF COOPERATION INTO AFRICA
WHICH PRODUCES NUMBER OF RAW MATERIALS SUCH AS IRON,
COPPER AND ALUMINUM. DURING VISIT TO ZAIRE, TUNISIANS
HAD DISCUSSED POSSIBLE ARAB CONSORTIUM INVESTMENT IN
COPPER REFINERY. MASMOUDI SAID THIS WAS ALTERNATIVE
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TO PROPOSAL BY EGYPTIAN BANK TO FINANCE SPECULATIVE

STOCKPILING OF COPPER IN ZAMBIA AND ZAIRE TO FORCE WORLD PRICE OF COPPER TO RISE SIMILAR TO RECENT OIL PRICE INCREASES. MASMOUDI SAID GOT DELEGATION DISCOURAGED GOZ ADVISORS FROM ENTERING INTO SUCH A SCHEME BUT PROPOSED FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR REFINERY AS LONG-RANGE ALTERNATIVE. HE DID NOT SAY WHICH ARAB COUNTRIES MIGHT PARTICIPATE IN THIS VENTURE. HE SAID SIMILAR JOINT ARAB-AFRICAN PROJECTS MIGHT BE WORKED OUT FOR MOURITANIAN IRON ORE AND ALUMINUM PROCESSING IN GUINEA.

2. MASMOUDI SAID AFRICAN ECONOMIC COOPERATION WITH EUROPE WAS UNDERGOING CHANGE AS RESULT OF DECISION AT ADDIS ABABA FOR ALL 41 STATES ASSOCIATED WITH EEC TO HARMONIZE THEIR AGREEMENTS SO THAT ALL STATES WOULD NEGOTIATE ON SAME FOOTING AND SAME TERMS IN RENEWING AGREEMENT WITH EEC. HE SAID THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT REVERSE PREFERENCES WILL NOT BE GRANTED TO EEC COUNTRIES.

3. COMMENT: MASMOUDI IS NOT WELL VERSED IN ECONOMICS AND HAS NEVER DISPLAYED MUCH INTEREST IN ECONOMIC QUESTIONS. HOWEVER, HE NOW MAY SEE TUNISIA IN ROLE OF "HONEST BROKER" IN PROMOTING ARAB-AFRICAN ECONOMIC COOPERATION, WITH TUNISIAN TECHNICIANS AND ADVISORS TRYING TO SELL WEALTHY ARAB STATES ON INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN ORE-RICH AFRICAN STATES.

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